

Samoa

MODERATE ADVANCEMENT

In 2024, Samoa made moderate advancement in efforts to eliminate the worst forms of child labor. In accordance with Samoa's National Strategy and Action Plan toward the Elimination of Child Labor in All Its Forms, Samoa prepared guidelines in both English and Samoan for businesses on the employment of children in line with the Amended Labor Employment Relations Act of 2023 and related regulations. The Child Labor Taskforce also conducted nationwide awareness campaigns, such as workshops on child abuse and children's right to education in schools, for village councils, and for church groups. In addition, Samoa held a 2-week training on child labor laws for new criminal enforcement investigators. However, Samoa lacks laws that prohibit using, procuring, or offering children for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs. In addition, the types of hazardous work prohibited for children do not cover street work, and free basic education is not established by law. It is also unknown whether investigations into suspected cases of the worst forms of child labor were conducted, prosecutions were initiated, or perpetrators were convicted.

PREVALENCE AND SECTORAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD LABOR

Statistics on Children's Work and Education		
Children	Age	Percent and Population
Working	5 to 14	12.6% (6,567)
Boys		15.0%
Girls		10.0%
Urban		5.0%
Rural		14.1%
Hazardous Work by Children	15 to 17	6.0% (676)
Boys		10.3%
Girls		1.4%
Urban		1.4%
Rural		7.0%
Attending School	5 to 14	93.7%
Combining Work and School	7 to 14	14.0%

Children in Samoa are subjected to the worst forms of child labor, including handling and transporting heavy loads, working at dangerous heights, and exposure to high temperatures. Children also engage in child labor in agriculture.

Overview of Children's Work by Sector and Activity	
Agriculture	Farming and animal husbandry.
Services	Street work, including vending, garbage scavenging, and domestic work.
Categorical Worst Forms of Child Labor[‡]	Working with dangerous machinery, being exposed to high temperatures, handling and transporting heavy loads, and working at dangerous heights.

[‡] Child labor understood as the worst forms of child labor *per se* under Article 3(a)–(c) of ILO C. 182.

SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT ACTIONS TO ELIMINATE CHILD LABOR

The suggested government actions below would close gaps USDOL has identified in Samoa's implementation of its international commitments to eliminate the worst forms of child labor.

Area	Suggested Action
Legal Framework	Ratify the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons. Ensure that the Labor and Employment Relations Regulations specify the conditions under which light work may be undertaken and define the activities that are permitted.

Area	Suggested Action
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits using, procuring, or offering of a child for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs.
	Ensure that the types of work that children perform in Samoa, including street work and vending, are prohibited for children under age 18.
	Ensure that the law criminally prohibits the recruitment of children under age 18 by non-state armed groups.
	Criminalize the use, procuring, and offering of all children under the age of 18 for prostitution, production of pornography, and pornographic performances.
	Ensure that laws prohibiting forced labor criminalize slavery and practices similar to slavery or debt bondage.
	Ensure that laws establishing free public education are free, meaning that no school official shall levy fees.
Enforcement	Publish information on criminal law enforcement efforts undertaken, including the number of child labor investigations initiated, the number of child labor penalties imposed, and the number of criminal law enforcement convictions secured.
	Establish a digital tracking system for civil worst forms of child labor.
Government Policies	Implement the National Child Care and Protection Policy (2020–2030) and publish results from activities executed on an annual basis.
Social Programs	Institute programs designed to address child labor in street work, including vending.

CHILDREN AT HIGHER RISK

Samoan boys living in rural areas are at a higher risk of engaging in hazardous forms of child labor, compared to girls and to children who live in urban areas. In addition, Samoan girls who live in both urban and rural areas are more vulnerable to engaging in child labor in domestic work.

BARRIERS TO EDUCATION ACCESS

Children in rural areas face barriers accessing education due to a lack of reliable transportation options. Additionally, parents with little to no income may not be able to afford to send their children to school.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR CHILD LABOR

Samoa has not ratified key international conventions concerning child labor, including the Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons. In addition, Samoa's laws and regulations do not meet international standards on the prohibition on slavery, debt bondage, and forced labor, or the prohibition on commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Laws and Regulations on Child Labor			
Standard	Age	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Minimum Age for Work	16	✓	Provision 32, Subsections 1 and 2 of the Labor and Employment Relations Amendment
Minimum Age for Hazardous Work	18	✓	Provision 32, Subsection 3 of the Labor and Employment Relations Amendment
Identification of Hazardous Occupations or Activities Prohibited for Children		✓	Provision 32, Subsection 3 of the Labor and Employment Relations Amendment; Article 21 of the Labor and Employment Relations Regulations; Government of Samoa Public Notice on Hazardous Work for Children

Laws and Regulations on Child Labor			
Standard	Age	Meets International Standards	Legislation
Prohibition of Slavery, Debt Bondage, and Forced Labor		X	Article 8 of the Constitution; Provision 10 of the Labor and Employment Relations Amendment; Section 157 of the Crimes Act
Prohibition of Child Trafficking		✓	Sections 155–157 of the Crimes Act
Prohibition of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children		X	Sections 73, 74, 82, and 157 of the Crimes Act
Prohibition of Using Children in Illicit Activities		X	
Prohibition of Compulsory Recruitment of Children by (State) Military		N/A†	
Minimum Age for Voluntary State Military Recruitment		N/A†	
Prohibition of Military Recruitment by Non-state Armed Groups		X	Article 8 of the International Criminal Court Act
Compulsory Education Age	16	✓	Article 2 (Section 2) of the Education Amendment Act 2019
Free Public Education		X	Articles 2, 4, 40, and 47 of the Education Act 2009

† Country has no standing military

On February 5, 2024, Samoa’s Labor and Employment Relations Amendment took effect. The Amendment empowers labor inspectors to conduct unannounced inspections and permits children between ages 13 and 14 to engage in light work for a limited number of hours. However, as with previous versions, it did not specify the conditions under which light work may be undertaken and furthermore did not define the activities that are permitted. The types of hazardous work prohibited for children do not cover street work, including vending. In addition, there is no free basic education for children in Samoa as established by law, increasing the risk of children’s involvement in child labor. Laws prohibiting forced labor are not sufficient because, while they do criminalize forced labor, they do not also criminalize slavery and practices similar to slavery or debt bondage. Samoa does not meet the international standard for the prohibition of child commercial sexual exploitation, because the Government of Samoa’s Crimes Act does not protect children ages 16 to 18. Research found no evidence of laws that ban using, procuring, or offering of children for illicit activities, including for the production and trafficking of drugs. Samoa also does not meet the international standard for prohibiting non-state military recruitment because its International Criminal Court Act does not apply to children ages 15 to 18.

ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS ON CHILD LABOR

In 2024, labor and criminal law enforcement agencies in Samoa took actions to address child labor. However, the government provided very little data related to enforcement actions.

Agencies Responsible for Child Labor Law Enforcement
Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Labor (MCIL): Enforces the Labor and Employment Relations Act, which includes investigating complaints of child labor law violations. Refers cases to the Ministry of Police and the Office of the Attorney General for enforcement. During the reporting period, MCIL conducted training on the new child labor law and refresher courses for labor inspectors. In 2024, the Ministry investigated an unknown number of child labor law violations complaints and referred an unknown number of cases to the Ministry of Police and the Office of the Attorney General.
Ministry of Police, Prisons, and Corrections Services (MPPCS): Enforces criminal laws related to child labor. Refers cases for prosecution. During the reporting period, MPPCS conducted regular day and nighttime operations to monitor and restrict child labor among street vendors. The Ministry also held a 2-week initial training on child labor laws for new investigators. In addition, the Police Community Engagement Unit launched child labor awareness campaigns on social media platforms, the radio, and television. Police outposts also held child labor awareness sessions in villages. In 2024, the Ministry referred an unknown number of cases for prosecution.

Enforcement Mechanisms and Efforts	
Has a Labor Inspectorate	Yes
Able to Assess Civil Penalties	Yes
Routinely Conducted Worksite Inspections	Yes
Unannounced Inspections Permitted	Yes
Has a Complaint Mechanism	Yes
Imposed Penalties for Child Labor Violations	Unknown
Conducted Criminal Investigations for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Unknown
Imposed Penalties for Worst Forms of Child Labor Crimes	Unknown

In 2024, 4 labor inspectors conducted 101 worksite inspections, finding an **unknown** number of child labor violations. It is **unknown** whether investigations into suspected cases of the worst forms of child labor were conducted, prosecutions were initiated, or perpetrators were convicted.

COORDINATION, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

Samoa established a mechanism to coordinate its efforts to address child labor.

Key Mechanism to Coordinate Government Efforts on Child Labor
<p>Child Labor Taskforce: Comprises MCIL; MPPCS; the Ministry of Women, Community, and Social Development (MWCSO); and the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC). Aims to reduce the prevalence of child vendors in towns and cities through patrol sweeps and by conducting outreach activities. Formerly the Child Vending Task Force. During the reporting period, the Taskforce, along with other government stakeholders, implemented the National Strategy and Action Plan toward the Elimination of Child Labor in All Its Forms. MWCSO, MPPCS, and MEC conducted town patrol sweeps and provided alternative income programs. MWCSO and MPPCS also conducted nationwide awareness campaigns, such as workshops on child abuse and children’s right to education in schools, for village councils, and for church groups.</p>

Samoa established policies related to child labor. However, these policies do not cover all worst forms of child labor, including working with dangerous machinery.

Key Policies Related to Child Labor
<p>National Strategy and Action Plan toward the Elimination of Child Labor in All Its Forms (2024–2027):* Outlines strategies to strengthen the legal and policy framework related to child labor, strengthen community engagement with families and children identified as engaged in hazardous street vending, and enhance data collection and regular reporting systems. Led by MCIL with support from ILO. In accordance with the plan, the Government of Samoa launched an Employee–Employer Guideline in both English and Samoan to provide guidance for business employers on the employment of children in line with the Amended Labor Employment Relations Act of 2023 and related regulations, education, and child protections laws.</p>
<p>Pola Puipui:* Sets a strategy to address violence towards children due to their sex, which makes them less likely to attend classes and more vulnerable to child labor. Led by MWCSO with support from the EU, the Government of Australia, the Government of New Zealand, and UN Women. During the reporting period, the District Development Plan allocated approximately \$74,074 annually, per district, for child protection programs that implemented “zero tolerance” messages and activities on violence toward children due to their sex.</p>
<p>National Child Care and Protection Policy (2020–2030): Outlines a strategic and high-level direction for child protection in Samoa. Led by MWCSO. Includes policies to prevent, eliminate, and address all forms of child labor and child trafficking, as well as to regulate, monitor, and evaluate child labor in the formal and informal business and employment sectors. Research could not determine whether activities took place to implement the policy during the reporting period.</p>

* Policy was approved during the reporting period.

† The government had other policies that may have addressed child labor issues or had an impact on child labor.

Samoa funded and participated in programs that include the goal of eliminating or preventing child labor. However, these social programs are inadequate because they do not assist children engaged in street work, including vending.

Key Social Programs to Address Child Labor

One Government Grant:† Provides financial support to public, church, and private schools to cover the costs of teachers' salaries (for church and private schools only), teacher and student teaching resources, school administration expenses, minor school facility improvements, ancillary school fees, and purchasing of supplies and equipment that children may need during the school year. During the reporting period, the One Government Grant, formerly known as the *Samoa School Fee Grant Scheme*, distributed approximately \$14.5 million USD (18 million WST) in funding for child education expenses. This program aims to ensure that compulsory education for all children in Samoa is enforced by reducing parents' financial burden of school fees and stationery. However, parents may still be charged up to \$14.55 USD (40 WST) annually for registration fees per child and school uniforms.

District Development Program:‡* Implements child protection programs that promote "zero tolerance" messages and activities on violence toward children due to their sex. During the reporting period, the District Development Program conducted national campaigns in schools and community centers to educate families, stakeholders, and communities about children's right to education. The Program also integrated child rights education into community workshops facilitated by village councils and church groups.

* Program was launched during the reporting period.

† Program is funded by the Government of Samoa.

For references, please visit dol.gov/ChildLaborReports